

Dear Trusted Councilors and City Staff Members,

As you all most likely heard yesterday councilor Merulla made a very disappointing statement during the casino sub-committee meeting by referring to the OLG as “Crack Dealers”. Despite Mr. Merulla’s strong position against a gaming facility in the downtown the reality is that this type of comment gives a black eye to all of council, and paints an unpleasant picture of all Hamiltonians. An elected official should absolutely never refer to a crown corporation as a drug dealer, because that implies that the motivates and primary purpose of the OLG organization are to offer unethical products/services to vulnerable addicts in our community. Councilor Merulla’s statement is pure defamation. The reality is that OLG is an organization that employs tens of thousands citizens in Ontario, contributes millions to each community with an OLG facility every year, provides \$140 million to the Ontario Trillium Foundation every year that is filtered to local organizations like The Good Shepherd and the Kiwanis Boys and Girls Club, and provides the province with up to \$2.0 billion annually to support health care and education. The money that OLG makes from the Flamboro facility is pumped back into the Hamilton community by funding the likes of St. Joseph’s Hospital and the Juravinski Hospital and Cancer Centre.

Make no mistake about it, regardless of whether the Liberals, NDP or Progressive Conservative are in power the fact of the matter is that any of those parties would happily accept the revenues OLG provides. OLG funding helps to make Ontario’s health care and education network invaluable to citizens. And it’s disappointing that as a member of the NDP that Sam neglects to acknowledge that the NDP that introduced gaming to the province of Ontario and helped to grow OLG. Would he have made the same comment if the NDP were in power?

I think it would go a long way for the city (whether through the mayor’s office, city council chamber, or city manager’s office) to issue a public statement stating that Councilor Merulla’s comments are not reflective of the thoughts or opinions of the City of Hamilton, its staff, its councilors, or its Mayor. For as long as OLG is a longstanding partner with the City of Hamilton I would suggest that their brand is not defamed by the elected officials of Hamilton.

I trust that you will all keep the contents of this note confidential and would hope that you will all, in your own way, attempt to make sure that proactive steps are made to correct Council Merulla’s comment.

Most Respectfully,
PJ Mercanti